DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 321 907 PS 018 990

AUTHOR Swap, Susan McAllister
TITLE Parent Involvement and Success for All Children: What We Know Now.
INSTITUTION Institute for Responsive Education, Boston, Mass.
SPONS AGENCY J.M. Foundation, New York, N.Y.; John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Chicago, IL.
PUB DATE Feb 90
NOTE 85p.
PUB TYPE Information Analyses (070)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC04 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Academic Achievement; Advocacy; Communication (Thought Transfer); Decision Making; Educational Philosophy; Educational Practices; Elementary Secondary Education; Family School Relationship; High Risk Students; *Inner City; *Models; Parent Education; *Parent Participation; Parent Role; Parents as Teachers; *Public Schools; School Community Relationship; *Urban Schools

ABSTRACT

This paper explores the links between student achievement and parent involvement, the importance of continuity between home and school, three philosophies underlying parent programs, and effective practices in parent involvement. The three philosophies considered are those of school-to-home transmission, interactive learning, and partnership for school success. The investigation of these philosophies reveals that the dominant approach used to enhance student achievement is school-to-home transmission of values and skills. The interactive transmission approach is identified as having particular promise when discontinuities between home and school disrupted student learning. The home-school partnership model seems to offer the most promise for bringing school achievement levels of low-income and minority children to those expected for middle-class students. Epstein's (1988) typology of types of parent involvement is used to outline examples of effective practice in each area. It is maintained that community linkages provide a promising direction for expanding the resources offered to children, families, schools, and community organizations. Barriers to effective parent involvement programs and the role of parent involvement in governance and advocacy are also discussed. (RH)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED321907

Parent Involvement and Success for All Children

What We Know Now

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

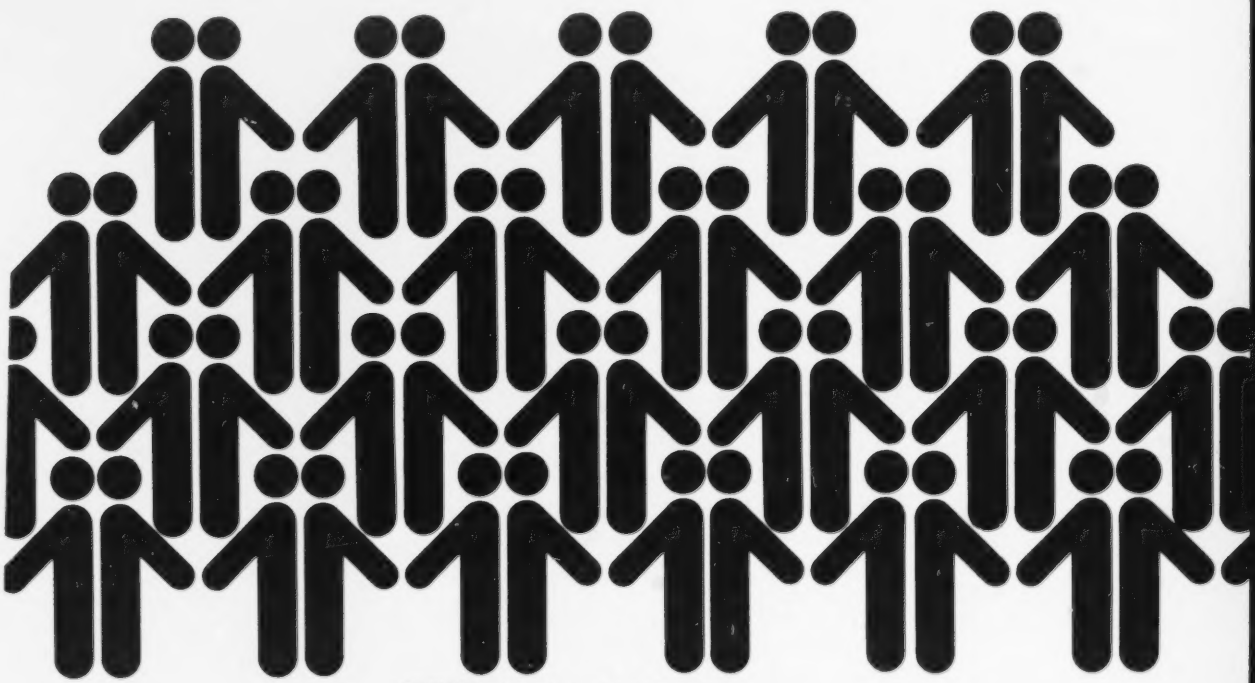
☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

X Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

by Susan McAllister Swap

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Inst. for Responsive Education
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."



PS 018990

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Institute for Responsive Education
605 Commonwealth Avenue, Boston, Massachusetts 02215

PARENT INVOLVEMENT AND SUCCESS FOR ALL CHILDREN: What We Know Now

by Susan McAllister Swap
February 1990

Schools Reaching Out is a project which attempts to demonstrate that urban public schools can fundamentally change their relationship with low-income parents and their communities, and in so doing, move closer to the goal of academic and social success for all children.

The project began in September 1988 as two schools -- the David A. Ellis School in Boston and P.S. 111, the Ochs School in New York City -- agreed to collaborate with the Institute for Responsive Education as "laboratory schools" trying out strategies to build new relationships with parents and the community.

Schools Reaching Out was designed to interweave research and practice. While the laboratory schools work, aided by IRE staff, to refine new strategies, a team of researchers is investigating questions of what works and why -- again, in collaboration with the schools' staff. This publication, and the series of which it is a part, is an effort to relate some of those learnings.

For more information on Schools Reaching Out or the series of publications, write to: Institute for Responsive Education, 605 Commonwealth Avenue, Boston, MA 02215.

Schools Reaching Out is funded by the Boston Globe Foundation, the Aaron Diamond Foundation, the J.M. Foundation, the Leon Lowenstein Foundation, and the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation.

Table of Contents

Introduction 1

The Link Between Parent Involvement and School Achievement 5

The Importance of Home-School Connections for Children at Risk 9

Barriers to Effective Parent Involvement Programs 13

Three Philosophies Underlying Parent Involvement Programs 17

A Philosophy of School-to-Home Transmission 17

A Philosophy of Interactive Learning 27

A Philosophy of Partnership for School Success 33

Effective Practices in Parent Involvement 43

Education Programs for Parents 43

Definition and Goals 43

Pitfalls 44

Effective Practices 45

Communication with Parents 49

Definition and Goals 49

General Strategies for Promoting Effective Communication 50

Improving Conferences 51

Parent Involvement at School 57

Definition and Goals 57

Promising Practices 58

Parents Assisting their Children in Learning Activities at Home 61

Definition and Goals 61

Promising Practices 61

Parent Involvement in Governance and Advocacy 67

A Brief History 67

Framework for Involving Parents as Advocates and Decision Makers 70

School-Community Linkages 71

Summary and Conclusions 75

Preface

In her report Parent Involvement and Success for All Children: What We Know Now, Susan McAllister Swap delineates the most effective means of creating atmospheres conducive to maximizing children's learning experiences. Following the works of Comer, Epstein, Seeley, and several other noted scholars in the field of education, Swap highlights the strong connection between parental involvement and student achievement and summarizes methods of facilitating the transmission of values and skills between the home and school environments. Swap's findings hold promise for all of us who are seeking to improve the quality of our schools.

Because discontinuities between home and school environments can impair children's abilities to process new information, parents and educators must work together to create an atmosphere that will foster optimal student learning. Swap proves that if we are to ameliorate the conditions of our educational institutions, school personnel must utilize the advice, strengths, and resources that parents can offer. At the same time, parents must become actively involved in advocating for the realization of success for all children.

Swap's convincing argument for increased parental involvement and her examination of barriers that prevent effective parental participation should encourage many schools to rectify current

relations between parents and educators.

Furthermore, her concise description of three philosophies of parental involvement should enable educators to establish and maintain supportive and effective parent advocacy organizations. Swap mentions that in spite of well-organized, sincere, well-intentioned programs, some parents are either unwilling or unable to participate in their children's learning experiences. The community and local businesses must therefore fill this void.

The organization I direct, the National Black Child Development Institute, for example, operates a comprehensive tutoring and mentoring progam for low-income, elementary school age Black children entitled "Each One, Reach One: The Spirit of Excellence" in Greensboro, North Carolina and Detroit, Michigan. Although, the project is in its pilot stage, we plan to implement it throughout the country in the 1990s. The goal of "Each One, Reach One" is to instill the values and teach the basic skills that children need for academic success. Through our experiences, we too have found that limiting the cultural dissonance between home and school allows children to process new information more easily and more accurately.

"Each One, Reach One" serves as a bridge between home and school. We actively recruit and train volunteers from the Black community and we operate the program in places within these communities, such as churches and recreational centers, with which the children are familiar. Thus the children are able to enjoy the learning process

in familiar surroundings. Thorough training enables our volunteers to understand and appreciate the children's cultural background. Thus, the children are more likely to be understood and are therefore, more able to assimilate new experiences, knowledge, and values. In addition, our volunteers are able to effectively teach the children the nuances of the dominant culture. Because of this information and experience, the children feel that their lives inside and outside school are connected. The children are, therefore, more prepared to manage new academic endeavors.

If our nation is to resolve the crisis of its education system, we must implement well-organized realistic plans. Susan McAllister Swap provides such an approach. Educators and parents must become committed partners in the campaign to improve our schools. Because children need continuity and support to meet the challenging demands of school, parents and community organizations must make their skills and talents available to school personnel, and educators must maximize the use of these resources.

Evelyn K. Moore
Executive Director
National Black Child
Development Institute

Introduction

Improving school achievement for all our children must be a national priority. Too many children are doing poorly in school. Levin (1987) estimates that currently about 30% of the children in this country are educationally disadvantaged. He emphasizes the association between poverty, cultural or linguistic differences and low academic achievement and high dropout rates. He concludes that: "These educational deficiencies later translate into poor life chances for employment, income, and political and social participation" (1988b, p. 2.)

The moral, educational, social, and financial burden of such pervasive school failure is unacceptable. Yet the numbers of children who are at risk for school failure are increasing. There are more children coming to our schools, particularly in urban centers, who are poor or from cultural or language minorities. Specifically, according to a recent Children's Defense Fund report (1989), the rate of poverty among young families with children almost doubled between 1973 and 1986. By the year 2000, the Census Bureau projects that the total number of minority children will have increased by 25.5% from 1985 levels and that the proportion of all children who are minority will have increased from 28.0 percent to 32.7% (p. 116). A recent study of immigrant students in U.S. public schools (McCarty and Carrera, 1988), highlights not only the historic size of the current migration to the U.S. (about 2.7 million children of school age), but also the shift from traditional lands of origin. Our millions of newcomers are coming primarily

from Mexico, Asia, Central and South America, and the Caribbean.

Public schools, and particularly our inner city schools, are being challenged to develop approaches to education that reverse this educational disadvantage. In addition to learning how to respond to the educational needs of the children arriving at our shores, we must find new ways to support success for all the children that currently populate our cities, regardless of race, class, ethnicity, or income level of their families. The problem of educational disadvantage is not a new one, nor is it confined to a single group or age level. But Jay MacLeod's ethnographic study of one group of urban youth (1987) provides a compelling view of the peril our society is facing. His investigation led him to the conclusion that we are developing a "static, nearly permanent element in the working class, whose members consider the chances for mobility remote and thus despair of all hope" (pp. 1-2). He insists that: "The problem is not that lower class children are inferior in some way; the problem is that by the definitions and standards of the school, they consistently are evaluated as deficient" (p. 99).

It is still possible to forge connections among quality education, hard work, academic achievement, and economic success in those populations that have been educationally disadvantaged. In this paper, we will explore how parent involvement can contribute to these connections by exploring the links between student achievement and parent involvement, the importance of continuity between home and school, three different philosophies underlying parent programs, and effective practices in parent involvement.

The Link between Parent Involvement and School Achievement

The evidence that parent involvement activities enhance children's school success is overwhelming. Anne Henderson, who has done the most extensive literature review on the subject (1981; 1987) concludes: "...the evidence is now beyond dispute: parent involvement improves student achievement. When parents are involved, children do better in school, and they go to better schools" (1987, p. 1). She explains that there is no one best way to involve parents, but "what works is for parents to be involved in a variety of roles over a period of time. The intensity of contact is important: "public-relations campaigns, one-way communications devices, or dog-and-pony shows are not effective" (p. 6). "The form of parent involvement does not seem to be as important as that it is reasonably well-planned, comprehensive, and long-lasting" (1987, p. 2).

These positive effects of parent involvement on student achievement are sustained across grade levels (preschool through high school), in programs that are home-based or school-based, and for low-income as well as middle-income families. There is a caveat about programs in low-income settings, however. Although studies demonstrate that parent involvement activities work to the extent that students achieve better than matched controls, the programs do not seem to demonstrate levels of achievement that are comparable to those of

middle-class children (See Cochran, 1988; Gillium, 1977; Tizard, Schofield, and Hewison, 1982; and Walberg, 1980).

There are some interesting exceptions to this pattern. For example, students in Comer's project in two public schools in New Haven have reached national achievement norms (Comer, 1980, 1988; Schorr, 1988). Begun in 1968 in two very troubled low-income schools, by 1988, children who had been in the program for five years significantly surpassed controls in other New Haven Title I schools on Metropolitan Achievement Tests in reading and math, approached national norms in reading, and attained the national norm in math (Comer, 1980). Fourth grade children were scoring at median grade level by 1980 on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (Comer, 1988).

The program is still in operation and has spawned several adaptations in other sites. Special features of the program were and are the mental health team, the School Planning and Management team, and the involvement of parents in all levels of school activities. In the original schools, parents were involved in many roles over a long period of time, which included:

- working with teachers to share their goals for their children in school, and the experiences and skills they felt would help children attain those goals;

- working with teachers in the planning and

execution of the social skills curriculum (an effort to teach children social skills that would be useful in the classroom and the larger community);

- functioning as paid aides in the classroom;

- volunteering for a variety of projects (e.g., accompanying the gospel choir);

- participating in social activities and events;

- being members of the School Planning and Management Team, the representative governance and management group in the school.

Comer explains: "We worked carefully with parents to make certain that their first projects were successful. Success breeds success and confidence, and as a result they were motivated to participate even more. When parents have a positive relationship with school staff, they can help children accept these people. This is important. When we ask low-income, minority-group children to achieve well in school -- an instrument of mainstream society -- we are often asking them to be different than their parents. With parents involved, there is no conflict" (1988, p. 219).

Henderson (1987) concludes that we still need to know what types and

intensity of parent involvement are needed to raise the achievement level of low-income and minority children to that expected for middle-class students. I would suggest that Comer's project provides important clues about what the differentiating characteristics may be. In the next two sections, I will develop a hypothesis about how different approaches to parent involvement may affect the level of children's school success.

The Importance of Home-School Connections for Children at Risk

The first question we must try to answer is why parent involvement programs that are reasonably well-planned, comprehensive, and long-lasting have important effects on the academic achievement of children at risk for school failure.

Regardless of the philosophy of the program, continuity in values between home and school reduces conflict for children, reinforces learning, and eases the transitions between the two environments. In more homogeneous communities, where teachers are drawn from the same culture and live in the same community as the parents, this continuity is taken for granted. However, in many communities today and especially in our major cities, teachers and parents often have different cultural and class backgrounds which lead to discontinuities for the children.

The usefulness of home-school continuity as a support for children's learning makes sense when we reflect on how children learn. Each child constructs knowledge anew, assimilating information that is gained through direct experience with people and objects into existing mental structures. A desire to make sense of the world propels the child toward new learning.

Although we do not know what the optimum conditions for new learning are for each child across the several areas of intelligence, Piaget

provided us with a useful insight about how cognitive growth occurs with his concept of disequilibrium. Children move to the next stage in their construction of knowledge about the world when they recognize that there is a discrepancy or conflict between what they are experiencing and how they are making sense of it. But the degree of discrepancy must be "just right." As Kegan (1982) puts it, children who are "ripe for evolution" experience the kind of intellectual crisis that leads to new learning when presented with a particular problem "that is precisely suited" to informing the child "that something is fundamentally wrong about the way one is being in the world" (p. 41). Then with repeated and varied encounters with the problem, the child will construct a new organization of the physical world that accommodates to this new experience.

Thus, one of the discoveries about disequilibrium is the need for the experience or problem to be appropriate to the child's developmental readiness. If the problem is too advanced or the child is not "ripe for evolution," he/she may ignore or reject the information or solve the problem incorrectly with no anxiety. If suitable opportunities for interaction with the environment are not provided, the child will not be catapulted into transition. These truths may provide a metaphor for helping us to understand what may happen to a child when there are significant discontinuities between ways of learning and knowing at home and at school. Because the population in our schools is becoming so diverse, it is imperative that we seek to understand the implications of these discontinuities.

Surface differences of language, skin color, use of touch and proximity, and even unspoken rules governing eye contact between teacher and child may make it more difficult for a child to draw on his or her past experiences and apply them to the new ways of learning at school. Other differences in ways of teaching and learning may be more subtle and perhaps even more disorienting for a child. Consider, for example, differences between the focus on individual achievement in Anglo culture versus the importance and centrality of learning through and because of relationships that is a part of Hispanic culture (Irujo, 1989); the experiences of rural children in the Carolina Piedmonts when they came to school in the city and were frustrated by different and unarticulated rules and expectations that linked particular classroom activities to a particular time and place (Heath, 1983); the differences between the focus on linear lessons in Anglo culture versus the focus on wholeness and the relationship of every part to the whole that is characteristic of Native American culture (Locust, 1988).

Confronted with significant discontinuities between home and school, failing to find a piece of themselves in school, failing to see how their past experiences of learning are reflected in school, failing to find confirmation of their construction of meaning in the world, these children may reject or ignore the new information they are receiving and continue to exclusively use their "old" processing schemas. Because in these circumstances the match between developmental ripeness and environmental stimulation is not optimal,

children's growth may be slowed.

Since we are aware that home-school connections are important to school achievement and that continuity in expectations and values are particularly important for educationally disadvantaged children, why are good parent involvement programs so rare, particularly in our inner city schools? In the next sections, we will examine the barriers to home-school partnership and three different approaches to overcoming these barriers.

Barriers to Effective Parent Involvement Programs

Most of us are deeply familiar with the barriers that inhibit effective home-school collaboration. These barriers of tradition, attitude, and changing times are not trivial and must be directly acknowledged to be overcome. They include:

1. A tradition of separation between home and school. Williams and Stallworth (1983-4), for example, in extensive interviews, discovered that while parents were eager to play all roles at school, educators were more comfortable in relegating parents to insubstantial bake-sale roles, leaving them feeling frustrated, belittled, and left out. Even when educators see parent involvement as desirable, they may not see it as essential to achieving common goals. And even active parents may see their involvement as part of an adversarial process; that is, as a necessary step in achieving equal or optimum treatment for their children.

2. A tradition of blaming parents for children's difficulties, particularly when parents are poor and not consistently involved in school. Teachers may feel that parents who do not come to school "don't care" and that they have inadequate skills. The essence of this orientation is summarized (though not endorsed) by Heath and McLaughlin (1987). They assert that by the mid-1980s, parents were brought to the fore as an important contributor to the inadequate

preparation of children. According to this analysis, "Deficiencies in parenting and in families....lie at the core of students' identified inadequacies as future workers, citizens, and parents... The inability or unwillingness of American families to socialize, support, stimulate, and encourage their children in the ways and objectives of schools lies at the root of the disappointing educational attainments cited by blue-ribbon commissions, special panels, and public officials" (p. 577).

Davies' (1988) sample of 150 teachers and administrators working with poor children in Boston, Liverpool, and Portugal echoed this deficiency orientation. In interviews, they revealed that they did "think of low-income/low-status families as being 'deficient,'" and many dwelled on family problems while ignoring family strengths (p. 53).

Interestingly, the educators' convictions about the apathy of "hard-to-reach" parents were not supported by data. Davies (1988) found that despite teachers' negative attitudes toward parents, parents in all three cultures expressed active interest in their child's progress at school and in getting involved in school. They just did not know how to get involved. Epstein's (1987) research adds another interesting wrinkle to this tradition. In her survey of 3,700 teachers in 16 districts in Maryland, she discovered that: "Teachers who used parent involvement frequently rated all parents higher in helpfulness and follow-through with learning activites at home, including parents with more or less education and single and

married parents" (p. 128).

3. Changing demographic conditions. Seventy percent of mothers of school-aged children are now in the workforce compared to 30% in 1960. Many more female teachers combine teaching and child-raising (now 73%, a gain of about 20% since 1960). Poverty is rising (almost one in four children now lives below the poverty line), as is the number of homes headed by single parents (now 25%, double the figure in 1970). In some communities, teacher unions are becoming stronger and limiting the availability of teachers for assignments outside of school hours. About one million immigrants enter the U.S. each year, many of whom do not speak English fluently. These changes in availability and background often make it difficult for teachers and parents to work together, even though these very changes make the necessity for partnership even more compelling. (For more data and a fuller discussion, see Braun and Swap, 1987; and Children's Defense Fund, 1989).

4. Persistent structures. Despite changing conditions, schools typically maintain traditional patterns of interacting with "outsiders." Short conferences, large open houses, parent association meetings in the morning, fund-raising activities and children's performances are ritualistic events, comfortable in their familiarity if not their effectiveness in building involvement between home and school. It is often a breakthrough just to realize that traditional structures may not be meeting current needs and that they could be adapted or changed.

Many schools have overcome these traditional barriers to parent involvement. In the section to follow, I will outline three different approaches to parent involvement, each of which leads to improved school achievement.

Three Philosophies Underlying Parent Involvement Programs

In this section, I suggest that parent involvement programs are organized according to three different philosophies and hypothesize that the third approach leads to the highest gains in student achievement. The school-to-home transmission philosophy encourages parents to adopt and actively support the values and "ways of being" that have traditionally led to children's success in school. The second model is an interactive philosophy which assumes that there are important and valuable differences between the cultures of home and school. Parent involvement programs built upon this philosophical framework encourage dialogue and reciprocal influence in order to create continuity in children's learning. The third philosophy embraces a partnership between educators and parents that is based on mutual respect and an explicit, shared commitment to supporting success for all children. Although parent involvement programs in the real world sometimes blur these distinctions, the philosophies deserve careful analysis because they reflect different assumptions, values, and goals that affect program directions and content.

A Philosophy of School-to-Home Transmission

In this model, educators specify what parents should do to support their children's learning at home. Educators hope that parents will participate in two ways. The primary expectation is that parents

will aid their child's learning by endorsing the importance of schooling and making sure that the child meets the minimum academic and behavioral requirements. For example, educators expect parents to make sure that a child completes homework. Or, if a child is getting into trouble at school, educators hope that the parent will work with them to reinforce expectations and create conditions at home that support a change in behavior (such as monitoring the amount of television watching or responding appropriately to a daily record of the child's satisfactory or unsatisfactory behavior in school).

A secondary hope (not quite an expectation) is that parents will spend enough time with their children to transfer to them what has come to be known as "cultural capital," that is, the ways of being, knowing, writing, talking, and thinking that characterize those who succeed in this culture. (For further discussion of the concept of cultural capital, see Delpit, 1988 or Heath and McLaughlin, 1987). A minimum version of this hope/expectation is that parents will read to their children and listen to their children read to them. Parents might also contribute to their child's cultural capital through such activities as helping their child with a science project or visiting a museum. Ideally, by spending time with their parents, children will extend and enrich what they learn at school: children will learn how to work hard, will gain knowledge and experience about the world, and will discover how to share this knowledge with others.

Epstein underscores the effectiveness of parent involvement programs

based on a philosophy of school-to-home transmission, in which parents of children at risk are asked to reinforce at home those behaviors, values, and attitudes which educators believe will lead to school achievement.

> The evidence is clear that parental encouragement, activities, and interest at home and participation in schools and classrooms affect children's achievements, attitudes and aspirations, even after student ability and family socioeconomic status are taken into account. Students gain in personal and academic development if their families emphasize schooling, let the children know they do, and do so continually over the school years (Epstein, 1987, p. 120).

Comer is explicit about the importance of parents supporting the growth of children's social skills:

> Children whose parents feel that they can and should be a part of the social mainstream have the best chance to acquire the social skills that will lead to school and life success. Children whose parents are not a part of the social mainstream can acquire such skills if they are taught in school and there is parental support for their acquisition and use. Regardless of the background of the parents, the climate and operation of a school must be reasonably good to constructively enhance children's social skills (1980, p. 192).

Comer's conviction about the importance of parents' attention to their children's school achievement and social skills emerged in part from his own experience in his family. As he explains in Maggie's American Dream, his mother was a domestic with almost no formal education. Now a prominent child psychiatrist and educator, Comer explains how his mother supported his achievement by going to school functions, advocating for him with teachers, insisting on fine work, and taking him to the library. She learned the lexicon of how to be an effective parent and what it

took for a black child to be successful in predominantly white schools by carefully listening to the women for whom she worked. She says: "So many people would just work and pay no attention to what's going on. I didn't just cook and clean. I worked with my eyes and ears open. I watched and listened to them and the way they lived. For me it was like going to school" (1988, p. 69).

It is important to explicitly state that the values and behaviors which are hypothesized to undergird school success are not confined to parents of a particular class, racial or ethnic background. For example, middle-class parents may not support the "social mainstream" values of hard work, self-discipline, self-motivation, and respectful manners; poor families may teach those skills and attitudes very successfully.

Clark's (1983) research, for example, illustrates differences in commitment to transmitting these values and behaviors within a sample of poor black parents living in the inner city. He visited the homes of ten poor black families and their high school children for at least two days each. He found that differences in achievement between the five children who were in the top 20% of the class and the five who were in the bottom 20% of the class were not attributable to poverty, family structure, mother's educational background, or other demographic variables. Rather, the differences were in the family culture and the nature of the parent-child and parent-school interactions. Parents of achieving students strongly encouraged academic pursuits, expected their

children to continue their education, set clear and consistent limits, had frequent conversations and nurturant interactions with their child, and monitored the student's use of time. Moreover, the parents of achieving students were involved with the school and visited the school periodically. In contrast, parents of the children who were doing poorly in school were not involved in school except when there was a negative incident. The students were less closely supervised and less explicitly encouraged to succeed.

The school-to-home philosophy could be summarized as follows: educators hope that parents will adopt an orientation that explicitly supports schooling and school personnel, and that they will either teach their children the social skills required for success at school and in life, and/or be responsive to the school's attempts to educate parents and children about these values and skills. It follows that as the strength of the parent involvement program is enhanced, more and more children will be equipped to succeed in school.

This orientation strikes a responsive chord in many families who hope that educational achievement will be the route to economic success for their children. The glitter of the American dream of rags to riches continues to inspire many of America's poor citizens and to attract immigrants from around the world. Thus, clear direction from the school about the social and academic skills that are needed for success and the parents' role in

supporting those skills can be a welcome offering.

Within this philosophy, parents are seen as a crucially important resource for children's success. However, as I have visited programs and reviewed published and unpublished literature based on programs of this type, I have noticed that parent programs based on school-to-home transmission often contain components that reflect an unwillingness to consider parents as equal partners having important strengths. Relationships may be defined through a contract, and parents may be reinforced for meeting their contractual obligations. For example, parents may be asked to sign an agreement indicating their commitment to providing a quiet space and protected time for their child to complete homework, or sign an agreement to read to or be read to by her child on a regular basis. Contracts rarely specify educators' obligations, and parents are seldom included in the negotiations about what should be done at home or how it will be done. Materials sent home to support educational enrichment are often in the form of recipes, presumably mistake-proof opportunities for parent-child involvement. Finally, parent education programs are often explicitly developed to help parents be "more effective parents" and to instruct them in the values and skills that will help them to be so. Each of these strategies suggests an unequal distribution of power and a conviction that school personnel know more about what parents should do to support their children than the parents do. However, if parents perceive that educators do not respect them or that they blame them for their children's

difficulties, they may hesitate to become involved or become disillusioned over time.

Although research has shown that the cooperation of parents in supporting children's academic and social competence can have significant positive effects on the achievement of educationally disadvantaged students, the philosophy has four limitations that need to be considered:

1. Parents may not be able to devote sufficient time and energy to parent involvement activities. As Bronfenbrenner (1975) articulated, "[Many] families live under such oppressive circumstances that they are neither willing nor able to participate in the activities required by a parent intervention program. Inadequate health care, poor housing, lack of education, low income, and the necessity for full-time work... rob parents of time and energy to spend with their children" (pp. 465-466). If success for all children depends on parent involvement, then many children without this support will continue to fail.

2. A related limitation of the philosophy is the possibility that the promise of equal opportunity through education and hard work is false. Suppose parents and children do learn the ways of thinking and being of the social mainstream, devoting much time, struggle, energy, and faith to the task. Then suppose, as is now increasingly the case, that despite success at school, young adults from impoverished or non-mainstream backgrounds are not

able to find a decent job and economic success. As mentioned above, Jay MacLeod's book Ain't No Makin' It (1987) is an ethnographic study which documents just this breakdown of the connection between educational achievement and economic opportunity for poor white high school students from the projects in a major urban center. Generations of experience watching peers and family members struggle, only to find that there "ain't no makin' it" has confirmed for these students that the effort to conform is both demeaning and ridiculous. For the children and parents who have tried and feel betrayed, and for those who are teaching them and feel despair, this outcome is insidious and dangerous.

William Julius Wilson's book The Truly Disadvantaged (1987) alerts us that the social condition of poor urban blacks is steadily deteriorating, that today's ghetto neighborhoods are populated almost exclusively by the most disadvantaged segments of the black urban community, and that long-term unemployment, high rates of street crime, and long-term poverty are characteristic of this "underclass" (p. 8).

Both analyses suggest that parent and school partnership, though critical, may not always be sufficiently powerful to counteract the complex factors that lead to poverty and family dislocation. One antidote to the disadvantage to children created by parents whose lives are a struggle for survival is to secure for these children the support of a network of individuals, agencies, and

businesses within the community. Such a network would not only benefit children, but perhaps secure for families the resources and skills to break the cycle of disadvantage. A closer and more intense collaboration between the school and these community groups and institutions on behalf of children at risk is a rich resource for families, and will be more fully discussed in a later section on family-school-community partnerships.

3. A third limitation of the school-to-home transmission philosophy is that it may be difficult to draw clear boundaries between the roles of school and home in formal education. In its most exaggerated form, parents would be asked to teach whatever skills or values the child was not acquiring, regardless of the financial or emotional cost to families. Parents who did not participate would be responsible for the failure of their child.

From my point of view, a study conducted by Mehran and White (1988) provides an example of a program which poses hard questions about appropriate boundaries. Parents of kindergarten children in Title I schools who were at risk for having difficulty learning to read were invited to participate in an experimental tutoring program. Of the 80 parents invited, 76 agreed to join, and 38 mothers were assigned to the experimental group. Parents were asked to come to two four-hour training sessions in July, follow-up meetings twice a week during the sunmmer, and additional meetings once a month during the school year. Parents were asked to tutor children in sounds and letters, basic sight words,

blending of sounds, and other pre-reading skills for 15 minutes three times a week from August to April. Parents were asked to submit tutoring logs every two weeks. Any parent who had not mastered the tutoring techniques were offered additional assistance until mastery was achieved.

Of the original 38 parents, two left the district; four did not submit logs; 12 tutored their child 0-1 times per month; 12 tutored 2-4 times per month; and only eight had 8-11 tutoring sessions per month (12 were expected). When the results were analyzed, only children in this last group made significant and lasting gains.

One could look at these results and conclude that the eight mothers who continued with the program contributed importantly to their children's success in reading. One might also conclude that the other 28-30 mothers were not sufficiently responsible or that the experimenters were not sufficiently attentive to the mothers' level of motivation. A third view might be that the intensity and types of interventions required were inappropriate within most family contexts and that this effort did not effectively capitalize on the willingness of 76 out of 80 mothers to support their child's learning at home. Within the school-to-home transmission model, questions remain to be answered about what roles parents should play to support children's learning, what the curriculum should look like, and how and by whom these decisions will be made.

4. A fourth limitation is the danger of demeaning the value or importance of the child's culture in the effort to transmit the values and goals of the social mainstream. Locust (1988) describes this discrimination very clearly

> Discrimination against persons beause of their beliefs is the most insidious kind of injustice. Ridicule of one's spiritual beliefs or cultural teaching wounds the spirit, leaving anger and hurt that may be masked by a proud silence. American Indians experience this discrimination in abundance for the sake of their traditional beliefs, especially when such beliefs conflict with those of the dominant culture's educational systems (p. 315).

A Philosophy of Interactive Learning

A philosophy of interactive learning undergirds some parent involvement programs. Such programs are built on an explicit premise of mutual respect between parents and educators, and they stress mutual learning and mutually developed objectives. Within this model, there is not a single mission, but two valued outcomes that justify parent involvement: students' successful achievement in the mainstream and the valuing of the goals and beliefs of the non-mainstream culture. This model may or may not permeate the structure and mission of the whole school. Sometimes only certain classrooms or programs within a school or district embrace this philosophy. The literature on such programs highlights parent involvement in classroom curriculum development as well as more standard activities, and parents are seen as the experts in their cultures with many strengths for the school to draw upon.

There seem to be several sources of inspiration for this model, though different sites may not share all of them. One source is the recognition by parents and/or educators of the importance of continuity in learning between home and school. School personnel may initiate an interactive learning approach because they value the richness and disparateness of the cultures of their pupils and the importance of understanding these cultures if they wish to support their students' learning. Finally, parents may initiate an interactive learning approach because political awareness and pride in their culture prompt them to insist on information about and appreciation of their culture in the school. Lightfoot (1978) articulates the importance of a home-to-school connection:

> If one recognizes the initial social and cultural task assumed by all families and their primary educative function, then it becomes clear that in order for schools to be productive and comfortable environments for children, they will have to meaningfully incorporate the familial and cultural skills and values learned in homes and communities.... When schools and families support dissonant values and goals, and when families and communities are perceived as inadequate and chaotic environments by arrogant and threatened school personnel, then education within families is devalued and systematically excluded from the school culture. Children experience the cultural dissonance between home and school, recognize the sharp contrasts and the forced choice they must make for successful accommodation in both worlds, and develop more or less functional strategies for relieving the environmental tensions. (pp. 170-171).

We seem suddenly to be in a world where these sharp contrasts and forced choices based on cultural differences are more dramatic and frequent. The reasons have already been suggested: increasing

poverty and generations of individuals in poverty, many new immigrants from non-Western cultures, and a decreasing number of minorities in the teaching professions, a problem that has now reached a crisis point (Hawley, 1989; Plata and Chinn, 1989).

One solution to this discontinuity is to recruit more teachers into the school that reflect and value the child's culture (e.g., MacLeod, 1987). This goal must be a national priority in teacher preparation institutions. Another solution is to bring more parents into the school. When parents and teachers get to know each other through frequent informal communication, through shared projects, or through volunteering in the classroom, children's behavior and learning problems tend to diminish. Lightfoot (1978) explains:

> It is important to recognize that the presence of parents in the school not only provides more adults to teach reading or offer help and support to children but also transforms the culture of the school. With these black mothers present, there is no way that the curriculum and environment could remain unchanged. Even if the content of the lesson appears the same on paper, the transmission of the lesson takes on a different quality and character when presented by the mothers. Even if the concepts are unfamiliar and alien to the child's experience, the mother-teacher's style of interaction, her face, and her character are not strange. It feels like home (p. 173).

A third solution is for parents or teachers to learn the points of difference in their cultures and to provide a lexicon for the children that would allow the children to become fluent in and appreciative of both cultures. We have already described the expectation that parents outside the social mainstream should

learn the culture of the school. Proponents of this model would argue that educators who do not share the culture(s) of their students are also responsible for learning the ways of knowing of the children and families that they teach.

Lisa Delpit (1988) makes it very clear that teachers of "other people's children" have an obligation to create a lexicon for children that gives them access to the social mainstream. Starting with assumptions that "If you are not already a participant in the culture of power, being told explicitly the rules of that culture makes acquiring power easier.... Those with power are frequently least aware of -- or least willing to acknowledge -- its existence" (p. 282), Delpit explains how to teach students the culture of power, while valuing the language, meaning-making, and culture that students bring to the classroom.

Heath (1983) provides another very compelling example of how white city teachers learned how to understand the culture of their newly integrated poor black students. In a focused staff development effort, teachers reflected on the insights Heath gained during her observations of the childrens' rural communities, supplemented these observations with their own experiences in the classroom, articulated the points of conflict and their reactions to them, discovered ways of valuing and making explicit their different ways of talking and working, and, perhaps most importantly, discovered ways of teaching that resulted in the academic success of those first grade children who had already been labelled as

"potential failures."

In North Barrow, Alaska, Inupiat Eskimos came to resist education for their children that reflected only Western values. Okakok (1989) explained that after local control of public schooling was granted to the natives in the mid-70s, the community insisted that "although Western education would serve its purpose, it would now be a purpose determined by our own people" (p. 407). She continued: "While seeking to produce students with academic achievements comparable to those of other areas of the United States, the Board has also sought to bring into our schools certain elements of historical and contemporary Inupiat Eskimo culture and knowledge of our natural environment. We have found that the attainment of academic skills in our students is directly related to our ability to successfully introduce Inupiat Eskimo concepts and educational practices into our schools" (p. 408). Local efforts by parents and the community to seek a form of schooling that incorporated and respected the world views of two disparate cultures led this school system to educational strategies that included a low teacher-student ratio, bilingual education, the selection of skills taught, a program of parent involvement, and the introduction of elements of historical and contemporary Inupiat culture into the curriculum.

Despite its attractiveness as a way of enhancing school success for more children at risk, this interactive philosophy also presents problems when used as the underpinning of parent

involvement programs.

1. It is a very difficult task to tease out the important elements of another's culture. At the very least, study of ethnographers' writings and the literature and history of the culture is required; ideally, educators would spend time in parents' homes and in the community learning first-hand about the strengths and values of the parents in the community. Such study requires time, adminstrative and faculty support, and an openness to deciphering and appreciating other world views.

2. Classrooms are now often filled with children from several different backgrounds, particularly in our cities. Teachers may need to be responsive to children and families from several different cultures and traditions. Without consultation and widespread staff commitment, attempts to respond to this diversity may result in fragmentation of teachers and the instructional program.

3. Some educators and families may believe that it is in the best interests of all for the American melting pot to be homogenized. They may feel that it is unrealistic and ultimately unethical for cultural differences to be maintained and celebrated. This perspective is reflected in the debate at Stanford over "non-Western" curriculum and in the controversy about the appropriateness of bilingual instruction for children. In my view, three conditions should encourage us to examine the merits

of the interactive perspective anew: our shrinking world, the transformation of the "minority" culture to the "majority" culture in our cities, and, as Levin (1988a) warns us, the specter of the educationally disadvantaged making up the underclass of a dual society, engendering "great political conflict and social upheaval" (p. 211).

A Philosophy of Partnership for School Success

There is an emerging model that draws on some elements of the two already described. It is a model which appears to meet Henderson's (1987) challenge of demonstrating levels of achievement in schools serving educationally disadvantaged children that are comparable to levels achieved in schools serving middle-class students. Schools which have adopted this model view parent-school partnership as a fundamental component of children's school success, and educators welcome parents as assets and resources in the search for strategies that will achieve success for all children. In this model, attitudinal and political shifts toward mutual respect and shared power are prerequisites to true partnership. The language used to describe this model is radical and visionary: "paradigm shift" (Seeley, 1989a) connotes a fundamental reorganization of the ways of thinking about a problem; "empowerment process" (Cochran, 1989) is defined as an ongoing process involving mutual respect, critical reflection, caring, and group participation which leads to a redistribution of valued resources. The most important precepts of this model are

described below.

1. Clarity and consensus about goals (e.g., Chubb, 1989; Levin, 1987; Seeley, 1986, 1988, 1989a and b). The school, parents, and community must have a shared sense of mission about creating success for all children. Such a commitment represents a significant change in how school failure is conceptualized. David Seeley (1989a) terms this change in thinking and attitude a "paradigm shift" in which blaming children and families for failure is replaced by an expectation of success for all children, not just the "bright" ones; the establishment of specific and often ambitious yardsticks of success; and an active search for teaching strategies that will lead to success. In successful schools, the mission becomes embedded in a culture of collegiality, caring, and experimentation, in which "what must remain stable in the life of the school is the emotional and intellectual dispositions toward improvement on the part of Responsible Parties" (i.e., teachers, parents, administrators, and community representatives; Joyce, Hersh, and McKibbin, 1983, p. 6).

One of the key ingredients in developing a shared mission of success for all children is agreement on the standards by which success will be judged. School personnel must replace a generalized interest in "students reaching their potential" and "feeling good about themselves" with a commitment to specific standards. The standards may include indicators of student

attendance, drop-out or suspension rates, student retention and self-esteem; they consistently include measures of proficiency in basic skills and reading, writing, and mathematics. In a paper describing the correlates of school effectiveness, Edmonds and Lezotte (1982) recommended that the ideal measures of pupil performance be locally generated, nationally validated, curriculum based, criterion referenced, and standardized. Moreover, the school or district should have a description of the level of mastery required for satisfactory progress. It seems that school-based discussion and agreement on goals and indicators of success are crucial because they add direction and zest to the teaching and learning efforts, increase the accountability of all participants, and provide a basis by which to include or reject educational programs or instructional strategies.

2. A revised curriculum (e.g., Comer, 1980, 1988; Cuban, 1989; Levin, 1987; Moses, Kamii, Swap and Howard, 1989; Slavin and Madden, 1989). A remedial approach to educating at-risk students is replaced by an accelerated approach. A comprehensive, intensive curriculum is used which assesses children's progress frequently, and provides individual support through peer or teacher instruction. Teaching is based on an enriched curriculum that builds on connections with the life experiences of students in their families, communities, and cultures; that stresses active learning; and that builds critical thinking skills along with basic skills.

3. Local autonomy and control (e.g., Carnegie, 1988; Chubb, 1989; Goodlad, 1984). It is very important for teachers and principals to have the flexibility to respond to changing needs and discoveries within the building. Control over major decisions about budget, incentives, resources, curriculum, schedule, and teacher assignments builds commitment, ownership, and professionalism among the staff. Local control should be supplemented by central adminstrative support (financial, intellectual, and emotional) for experimentation.

4. Partnership among educators, parents, and community members (e.g., Comer, 1988; Henderson, 1987; Moses et al., 1989; Schorr, 1988). In the summary of what she learned in investigating 20-30 programs that were successful in breaking the cycle of disadvantage, Schorr states: "Successful programs see the child in the context of family and the family in the context of its surroundings." (1988, p. 257). Successful schools draw on parents for help and advice; they seek from parents confirmation of the schools's high expectations for the children; they clarify how parents can help support their children's achievement. Successful programs also draw on other resources within the community, creating business, agency, and medical partnerships so that services can be offered to children and families in a non-bureaucratic way and needed materials and funding can be obtained.

Recognition of the necessity of collaboration among educators,

parents, and community representatives in meeting the goal of success for all children is an essential part of the "paradigm shift" as articulated by Seeley (1989a). If the school community honestly commits to the goal of success for all children, then the community also recognizes that the challenge is so great that it cannot be met by parents or teachers or agency personnel working in isolation. The combined resources of the community are essential to discovering and implementing effective solutions to improving public education.

The focus on intellectual activity and inquiry remains front and center in this model. Collaboration among adults does not highlight relationship building for its own sake, but rather problem-solving to support school success. Ideally, adults model for children the excitement and productivity of sustained intellectual activity in the context of improving the school.

Model Programs. Comer's project and its replications, Levin's accelerated schools in California, and Moses' program in Cambridge, Massachusetts are programs which illustrate partnership for school success. Comer's model (Comer 1980, 1988; Schorr, 1988) has already been highlighted. The original pilot schools in New Haven and the schools throughout the country which have adopted the model share the features of a common mission and public review of children's academic progress; enriched, integrated curriculum and a collaborative, preventive approach to handling children's behavior and academic problems through the

mental health team; intensive, respectful partnership with parents in all aspects of the program, and local control as demonstrated through a School Planning Management Team. As described above, these schools are successful in supporting students in reaching mainstream levels of academic achievement.

Levin (1987, 1988a, 1988b, Freedburg, 1989) has initiated a vision of an "Accelerated School" in two pilot sites in California. The mission of these schools is to move every student into the educational mainstream by the end of the sixth grade. The development of objectives for each child and periodic assessment of each child's progress are components of the model. The curriculum, which is still evolving, rejects a remedial approach to education and "emphasizes language -- reading and writing for meaning -- in all disciplines, even in mathematics. The curriculum also applies learning to everyday problems and events. Instructional strategies also include peer tutoring and cooperative learning" (Levin, 1987, p. 20).

Local control of the program in each school is ensured by a school-based governance model, a steering committee, and small groups or "cadres" of teachers who are given time and resources to focus on potential obstacles to fulfilling the vision and plans for overcoming them. Parent involvement is seen as integral to the vision, and parents are involved in the steering committee, in setting high expectations for children, in affirming an agreement which specifies the obligations of parents, students, and school

staff in reaching the goals, and in providing academic assistance to their children. Although it is too soon to tell whether this approach will be successful in launching each child into the educational mainstream by the sixth grade, energy, commitment, and excitement are high among students, educators, and parents.

Robert Moses (Moses, Kamii, Swap, and Howard, 1989) is a parent with rich experience as a community activist in the civil rights movement, whose charismatic intervention in a school led to significant improvement in students' achievement in mathematics. The focus of the project became finding a way for all children to have access to the college preparatory mathematics curriculum of the high school through transformation of the middle and elementary school curricula. A cornerstone of the "Algebra Project" became:

> .... the expectation that every child in the Open Program could achieve math literacy, an ethos powerful enough to suffuse both peer and adult culture. The components of this effort included changing the content and methods of teaching math, involving parents in activities that would better enable them to support their children's learning, teaching students to set goals and motivating them to achieve, and reaching out to Black college graduates in the Boston area who would serve as tutors and role models of academic success" (p. 428).

The project produced its first full graduating class in the spring of 1986. Not a single student was placed in lower level math courses in the high school, and 39% of the graduates were placed in honors courses. Through a collaborative governance model that involved all components of the school community, the math tracking

system was eliminated in this school, and all children, including the females and minority students who had previously been excluded, gained access to the upper-level mathematics courses.

There are three challenges to widespread adoption of the partnership model in inner city schools. The first is a requirement that there be a strong leader who is able to articulate a vision of success for all children, inspire belief in the vision, and eagerly seek involvement and ownership of the vision by teachers, administrators, parents, and community members. The leader may come from outside the school (e.g., university professors or a parent) or from inside the school (e.g., Deborah Meier as principal of New York's Central Park East School; Schorr, 1988), but a strong leader must emerge who can lead the school forward.

Another challenge is the energy required of all responsible parties for initiating and maintaining the school transformation. In schools which have adopted the partnership model, the transformation appears to be invigorating and renewing. Yet the commitment to do more than is required, initially and over time, may threaten the culture of most of our inner city schools.

A final challenge is the need to maintain local control of governance and resources in the schools which initiate partnership models. In the bureaucracies of large city schools, it is often extremely difficult to hold on to key personnel and resources long

enough to allow an ambitious model to show results. Despite the obstacles, a model for success for all children now seems to be available to us. In the final section of this paper, we will take a closer look at how parent involvement programs are organized, analyzing six components of these programs and outlining effective practices in each area.

Effective Practices in Parent Involvement

Joyce Epstein (1988) has outlined five areas of parent involvement: education programs for parents; communications with parents about school programs and children's progress; parent involvement at school; parent involvement in learning activities at home; and parent involvement in governance and advocacy. Effective programs and practices will be outlined in each of these areas and in a sixth: community linkages.

Education Programs for Parents

Definition and Goals. Epstein (1988) suggests that schools can support parents in meeting their basic obligations as parents by offering information about children's health and safety, identifying medical or social service resources in the community as needed, and offering educational programs for parents on child-rearing issues. In addition, some schools provide programs that are designed to meet parents' needs not directly related to their parenting role: e.g., classes in English as a second language, workshops on getting a job, excursions to get to know the city.

As one element of a parent involvement program, parent education programs can provide a mechanism for getting parents into the school and can add to parents' knowledge about the complex role of

parenting. When programs are effective, parents feel connected to the school in a common effort to support the growth and learning of their children.

Pitfalls. In designing an effective program, there are some very common pitfalls to avoid. The first is for educators to develop activities based on what they think parents should know or be interested in. As described in the section on school-to-home transmission, activities may be selected based on a deficit model of parent education rather than a model that builds on family strengths. (See Cochran, 1988; and Rich, Mattox, and Van Dien, 1979 for a fuller discussion of building on family strengths). If parents' interests are not tapped and they do not come to activities, educators who have taken the trouble to plan them often feel rejected and angry.

A second pitfall is to plan many single session activities on different topics. Although this strategy seems to be the best way to meet everybody's needs, it often has the opposite effect. The approach is very time-consuming, because each activity requires different leaders, outreach, and organization. Often these activities are attended by different groups, so that parent involvement is not enhanced over time. Moreover, the organizers tend to burn out, because there is no sense of momentum and little reward.

A third common pitfall is to provide activities which permit

little or no opportunity for parent interaction, feedback, or trial and adaptation of new ideas over time. Activities without these components may still be stimulating, but they seldom lead to changes in attitude or behavior.

A fourth pitfall, if a primary goal is to enhance parent involvement, is that parent education programs may function totally outside the ordinary life of the school. That is, parents may come to school for activities, but see only other parents, an outside "expert" and one school-based organizer. To enhance parent involvement with the school, it is useful to include some education activities of interest to both parents and educators.

Effective Practices. The most critical dimension in providing educational programs for parents is to make sure that the programs offered are responsive to parents' needs and interests as they perceive them. Some form of needs assessment is critical, whether it be through interviews, questionnaires, group meetings, or some combination of these activities. All parents should have an opportunity to respond, and every effort should be made to ascertain that any sample of respondents is representative of the whole parent body. This may mean translating questionnaires into relevant languages, sending a school representative out into the community to speak to parents on their turf, or using a team of parents to contact one another. Although this may seem obvious, gathering information from parents is important because it demonstrates that parents' concerns and needs are of interest

to school personnel. The process of gathering data may be as significant as the information collected.

Once data are gathered, programs should reflect the parents' priorities. If possible, an advisory committee of parents and educators should get together to review priorities, develop programs, and evaluate programs that were presented. Identifying a chair or co-chairs of a parent education committee is a useful step, because someone needs to take responsibility for calling and leading advisory board meetings, and for coordinating tasks such as finding out what parents want, identifying and securing resources, discussing programs with potential speakers or group leaders, and publicizing and evaluating the programs. In different schools, the leadership role may be assumed by a parent, teacher, administrator, or some combination of these. The job is usually performed better if it is not a "freebie." A stipend for a parent or teacher coordinator or release time for a teacher intensifies their commitment.

When presenting activities, parents' concerns about transportation, scheduling, and child care should be noted and taken into account. In general, parents appreciate formal and informal opportunities to express their reactions to programs and to ask questions. Inviting parents to evaluate activities demonstrates an interest in program improvement and may support parents in feeling that they have some ownership of the activities. A range of activities is usually most effective in

drawing from a cross-section of the parent population. For example, some may prefer small discussion groups that meet over several weeks, while others may prefer a visit by an outside expert, or workshops to make and take toys. Ideally, resources will be available to offer programs over several years, so that different priorities can be addressed over time, and some issues can be explored in depth. In general, it is better to offer a few high-quality, well-planned activities than to provide a lot of mediocre events. Success breeds success, and excellent programs are the best way to recruit parents for future activities. (See Swap, 1987, for an extended discussion of these issues.)

The answer to the question, "Which parent education activities are most directly related to school achievement for educationally disadvantaged students?" continues to be somewhat ambiguous. As summarized by a digest of the ERIC Clearinghouse on Urban Education (1986), parent participation in at-home learning activities was generally effective in improving students' intellectual functioning and achievement, and parent education activities to prepare parents for home learning were often important. In addition, parent participation in a wide-ranging group of other activities (e.g., fundraising, attendance at school meetings) appeared to have some effect on student achievement if the activities were oriented to the needs of the community. If time and resources are limited and student achievement is the primary goal, it seems clear that some of the parent education activities should explicitly involve parents in supporting this goal.

Communication with Parents

Definition and Goals. Epstein includes in this category a range of communications initiated by the school about children's progress and school programs. Communication strategies might include standard activities such as conferences, report cards, notices, and open-house programs, as well as more innovative strategies developed by each school. From my perspective, this category should also include communication from home to school. Parents should be encouraged to share information that might help teachers understand their child's learning style, special strengths, or crises that might impede the child's responsiveness.

Good communication between home and school is the key to parent involvement, and the key to good communication is an attitude that welcomes parents as adult peers in a context of mutual respect. Effective communication is based on relationships between parents and educators in which each respects the other's contributions and expertise; boundaries are clear (e.g., teachers are not expected to be therapists and parents are not expected to be certified teachers); conflicts are dealt with openly and respectfully; and contacts are rewarding.

The most obvious reason for parents and teachers to communicate is to nurture the growth and learning of individual children by sharing information, insights, and concerns. However, if parents

and educators are in a partnership to support school success for all children, then parent communication and collaboration must be viewed as a necessity and not an extra; sustained interest in modeling, monitoring, and enriching children's intellectual and social growth should be primary goals of adult communication; and the school must become a responsive community institution rather than an outpost of a distant and hostile bureaucracy.

General Strategies for Promoting Effective Communication.

The principal of the school can set the tone. For example, Hauser-Cram (1983) discovered that there was significantly more parent involvement in schools where principals had established an explicit policy encouraging such involvement.

Once the expectation for involvement has been set, relatively frequent and informal contacts work best to develop relationships (e.g., a few words when dropping off a child, parent and teacher sitting together at a breakfast before school, sending brief notes back and forth). Informal relationships based on mutual respect provide the structure for more focused collaborative activities. Ideally, teachers or teachers and parents together could brainstorm about the most effective and efficient ways to communicate. They would discuss what parents and teachers want to know and what strategies are currently working well and not so well.

There is no single best solution: the best route to effective

communication is one that is adapted to local conditions and the preferences and needs of the teachers and parents. In my experience, it is best to take advantage of the special interests and skills of particular teachers and parents: a teacher with artistic and journalistic skills might enjoy organizing a newsletter; a parent with youngsters at home might volunteer for a telephone chain; teachers might coordinate with students in the high school art department to develop a video illustrating an ordinary classroom day; a bilingual parent might contribute to a translation service; a parent living in a project might be willing to hold an information meeting there for other parents who find it hard to get to school. For ideas of what others have done to promote good communication, see Chrispeels, Boruta, and Daugherty, 1988; Henderson, Marburger, and Ooms, 1986; Office of Community Education, 1989a and 1989b. In-service programs for parents and teachers designed to promote good communication in schools are also available. (See, for example, Braun and Swap, 1987; Cochran et al., no date).

Improving Conferences

For most schools, the child-centered conference is the focal point for communication with parents. A state-wide survey of working parents in California, for example, found that parents preferred the individual conference to other types of information programs offered by the schools (Hobbs, 1984). Despite its importance, many parents do not attend scheduled conferences. Epstein's

survey of Maryland school districts (1987), for example, revealed that "more than one-third of the parents had no conference with the teacher during the year" (p. 124).

There are several practices that may make conferences more productive and more widely attended. These practices are designed to overcome the built-in problems of the traditional conference format, in which two strangers attempt to share a great deal of information about a subject of deep mutual concern in 15 minutes. In many instances, the conference is also the primary mechanism for identifying and solving problems that the child may be experiencing and for resolving conflicts between parent and teacher. When differences of language, class, or background are added, problems of communicating comfortably and unambiguously are usually intensified. With conferences carrying such a heavy burden, it is not surprising that both parents and teachers come to them with trepidation as well as hope. These suggestions, directed to the teacher (adapted from Braun and Swap, 1987), can help.

1. Relationship Building. Conferences are easier to prepare for when you have a relationship with the parent(s) or guardian. Social events, classroom observations, notes, telephone call-in times, can help create a context for greeting the parent(s) and discussing complex information.

2. Purpose. Despite the fact that Epstein places conferences

under the category of communication with parents about school programs and children's progress, conferences are likely to go better if they are reframed as opportunities for information sharing (teacher to parent and parent to teacher) and joint decision-making.

3. Preparation. If this is a regularly scheduled conference, send early notification (2-3 weeks). If possible, add a personal note to a formal notice and offer some flexibility in appointment schedules. Don't wait if a problem emerges several weeks or months before the regularly scheduled conference, but try to get together as soon as possible. Plan for an appointment time that will be sufficient to discuss the anticipated content. For example, if a problem needs to be discussed, a half hour will probably be needed. Assemble relevant materials (papers, pens) if appropriate. Some teachers invite parents to bring in relevant materials or a list of questions or issues they want to discuss. Plan an agenda in which you allow at least half the time for parent concerns and ideas. Set priorities for discussing your own concerns and ideas, expecting that you will have time to deal with only one or two issues.

4. Practice in Anticipation of Difficult Moments. Most teachers have excellent communication skills. However, even sensitive communicators have difficulty giving negative feedback, resolving conflicts, and listening when they feel threatened, angry, or impatient. In-service training which identifies key skills and

provides opportunities to practice difficult situations is essential. Having a colleague who will give you feedback when you try out ideas and language can be very useful.

5. Setting the Stage. Try to provide a physical environment which comes as close as possible to the setting you would create for a friendly, formal adult interaction. Two adult-size chairs are a minimum requirement (or three if both parents come), and privacy is important. Something to eat or drink that is traditional within the parents' culture is a nice touch if it can be managed.

6. During the Conference. Clarify the agenda, identifying issues or questions parents want to discuss. (Because of cultural differences, not all parents will feel comfortable in doing this.) Seek the parents' expertise about their child. Appreciate the child's unique qualities in a sincere, non-trivial way. Avoid jargon. If shortage of time is pressuring you into an ill-considered decision, arrange another meeting. If the conference results in plans for teacher or parent action, decide how you will follow up to exchange results.

Administrators can:

1. Initiate a review of conference scheduling policy with central administration, teachers, parents, and union representatives. The goal would be to provide adequate teacher release time for

conferences while continuing to offer flexibility in scheduling for educational and parental needs.

2. Model a welcoming attitude towards parents in formal and informal settings, and provide a written policy which supports parent involvement.

3. Make available a small budget for coffee, snacks, and duplication costs during conference times.

4. Create partnerships with media to publicize scheduled conference days and with businesses to support parent participation. In Houston, Texas, for example, Operation Fail-Safe focused on increasing parent participation in conferences. A local advertising agency designed a total public awareness campaign and the logo and theme appeared on 100 billboards throughout the city. Approximately $1,700,000 in public service advertising was donated by radio, television, and outdoor media to promote teacher-parent conference days. After the first year of operation, parent participation was up 47%; 75% of elementary parents participated in conferences. The Indianapolis school system has expanded on this model in their "Parents in Touch" program (Collins, Moles, and Cross, 1982).

Parent Involvement at School

According to Epstein, this category of parent involvement includes parent volunteers who assist teachers, administrators, and children in classrooms or in other areas of the school or who work as paid aides. "It also refers to parents who come to school to support student performances, sports, or other events" (1988, p. 2).

Definition and Goals. The participation of parents in children's school events is one of the most obvious and direct ways to help children feel that their lives at home and at school are connected. No parent can deny the importance of this connection who has seen his/her child's pride when pointing out a composition or painting prominently displayed on the wall of the classroom, or has experienced their child's disappointment if the band solo, the caught pass, or the three lines in the school play were missed. Despite some nervousness, teachers also appreciate the support of parents during these events, and find adult acknowledgment of their hard work rewarding.

Parent involvement as school or classroom volunteers or paid aides can have a major impact on the school, on parents, and on children. Schools benefit from a well-run volunteer program because it extends what schools can accomplish. For example, the library can be open for more hours and children can receive

individual attention in selecting books or using references; teachers can work with individual children while volunteers listen to groups of children read or assemble art materials for a project; parent expertise in computers can extend students' understanding and experience with computers; a paid aide in a bilingual classroom who shares the children's first language can help make connections between curricula and culture for teachers and students. In some inner city schools (as in Head Start programs), parent volunteers or aides with limited education and job experience discover their potential and receive the support they need to go back to school and find good jobs. As mentioned earlier, children, particularly those from minority cultures, learn more easily when they are helped by volunteers or aides who look and speak as they do.

Promising Practices. Effective volunteer programs contain predictable components. These include:

1. A coordinator to identify needs, arrange training, and monitor the program.

2. A method to ascertain the interests and skills of potential volunteers and the needs of teachers, adminstrators, and specialists for volunteers. For example, teachers can develop one-page questionnaires that outline curriculum themes, one-time or ongoing needs, and opportunities for parents to list special interests, hobbies, or talents. As explained in Focus on Parents:

Successful Strategies for Parent Involvement (Office for Community Education, 1989a) a volunteer job description can provide a standard format for providing information that includes the title of the position, a description of the work needed (skills, time commitment), and a contact person. Job descriptions could be disseminated by mail, in newsletters, in the local newspaper, by posting in the school or at community centers, or by broadcasting openings on local radio and television stations.

3. A method to match volunteers or aides and their supervisors.

4. A method to orient and train volunteers. Training may include a general orientation session led by the coordinator, but must include more detailed information from the supervisor about what is expected, opportunities to learn specific skills, and information about common questions or concerns (e.g., setting limits for children, procedures in case of illness, what to do if personality conflicts arise). Some schools or districts have published manuals for volunteers which summarize useful information and help to orient new volunteers. (For example, see National School Volunteer Program, 1979; South Carolina State Department of Education, 1985).

5. A procedure for monitoring the program. The coordinator should be a trouble-shooter who stays in touch with both school personnel and volunteers or aides to identify problem areas, significant accomplishments, and further needs.

6. A procedure for celebrating contributions and communicating them to others. When parents give their time and expertise to the school, it is important that their gifts be publicly acknowledged. A school might choose to offer certificates, a celebration dinner, a school assembly where children express their appreciation, and/or an article in the local newspaper or a program on local television explaining what individuals have done.

Parents Assisting their Children in Learning Activities at Home

Epstein (1988) includes in this category requests and guidance from teachers for parents to assist their children in home learning activities coordinated with their classwork. Teachers can offer information about skills needed to pass each grade. Parents may request information on how to monitor, discuss, and assist with homework and to make decisions about other activities that will help their children be successful in school.

Definition and goals. There are several different models that have been suggested for home-based learning activities. These include parent support for supplementary reading activities, parent involvement in generic enrichment activities, parent activities specifically tied to the school curriculum, and school activities that are generated from events and incidents in the community. All models are designed to support the child's success in school, and some are part of experimental programs to increase students' achievement test scores.

Promising Practices. Perhaps the most commonly used model for home learning is a request from school for parents to support their child in supplementary reading activities, either by reading to the child, having the child read to them, or monitoring the child's silent reading for specified periods per day or week. The

importance of these activities was highlighted by a remarkable study by Tizard, Schofield, and Hewison (1982). They discovered that elementary-age children in a working-class area of London who read aloud to their parents 2-4 times a week using books sent home from school showed highly significant gains in reading achievement compared to students with no intervention and to students who were provided with a special teacher who listened to them read and offered tutorial assistance in school. Other studies also support the connection between parent involvement and reading achievement. For example, Cummins (1986) learned that reading achievement scores improved when children read stories to their non-English speaking parents and then explained the story in their native language. Epstein (1987) conducted a survey of parent involvement practices in inner-city schools and discovered:

> A story builds from all of the sources in the survey: Principals actively support parent involvement, especially in reading activities; teachers request more parent involvement on reading activities at home; parents conduct more learning activities in reading than in other subjects; and the students' reading achievement is improved. These results suggest the importance of subject-specific connections (p. 128).

Student achievement also seems to increase when parents are more generally involved in supporting children's schoolwork at home. For example, Walberg, Bole, and Waxman (1980) discovered that when Chicago parents of elementary students participated intensively in a program to create academic support conditions in the home, the students gained .5 to .6 grade equivalents more on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills than did students who were less intensively

exposed. Academic support conditions included a contract for home study, parent agreement to provide a study space for the child, daily discussion about school, parental enthusiasm about the child's achievements, and willingness to cooperate with the teacher. Several school systems have developed calendars of activities, suggestions for using the newspaper or TV, family math games, or reading charts. For an excellent sampler of such materials, see Chrispeels, Boruta, and Daugherty (1988). Other sources of home learning activities marketed more directly to parents are Dorothy Rich's MegaSkills, (1988) and Baron, Barn, and MacDonald's What Did You Learn in School Today? (1983). MegaSkills (1988) has been widely used, perhaps because it is organized according to skills required for achievement in school (e.g., motivation, perseverance, confidence, teamwork) and provides inexpensive and easy to follow suggestions of activities to do at home which support the development of these skills.

Several school systems have experimented with the third model of home-based learning activities in which home activities are specifically integrated with the classroom curriculum. For example, Epstein (undated) has developed a research-based process to involve parents in children's homework. "Teachers Involve Parents in Schoolwork" (TIPS) offers programs to support students' learning in math, science, social studies and art. A Title I program in Chicago enrolled parents in a tutorial program one day a week so that they could help their chldren with their homework for one hour a week. Parent training included instruction related

to the homework, discussions on topics related to child-rearing, crafts, and field trips. Children's achievement scores were slightly above expected levels. The Parent Partnership program in Philadelphia provides reading and mathematics booklets to parents as well as a Dial-A-Teacher-Assistance project for help with homework in all basic subjects. The San Diego Unified School District offers materials in English and Spanish that cover homework assignments in reading and mathematics through grade six. Each of these projects and many others are described in Collins, Moles, and Cross (1982).

The fourth model seeks to create more opportunities for connecting home and community content to the school curriculum. Teachers and parents at the King School in New Haven (Comer, 1988) illustrated this model when they developed a politics and government unit as part of their social skills curriculum. The unit included many activities for parents, students, and staff around the mayoral election, culminating in an evening when students hosted a candidates' night for the parents, staff, and candidates.

Auerbach (1989) at the University of Massachusetts Family Literacy Project is searching for a way to draw on parents' knowledge and experience to inform school- and home-based instruction. She has formulated a "social-contextual approach to family literacy" which critically analyzes the assuumptions and practices of programs which encourage parents to do school-based activities at home. Drawing upon the philosophy of other effective literacy programs

among Hispanic, Piedmont, and Navajo families, Auerbach explains that in their program:

> The goal... is to increase the social significance of literacy in family life by incorporating community cultural forms and social issues into the content of literacy activities. The model is built on the particular conditions, concerns, and cultural expertise of specific communities, and, as such, does not involve a predetermined curriculum. Instead, the curriculum development process is participatory and is based on a collaborative investigation of critical issues in family or community life (p. 177)... This approach fosters a new formulation of what counts as family literacy. This broadened definition includes, but is not limited to, direct parent-child interactions around literacy tasks; reading with and/or listening to children; talking about and giving and receiving support for homework and school concerns; and engaging in other activities with children that involve literacy.

Other activities include exploring family literacy practices, modeling whole language activities, validating culture-specific literacy forms, exploring parenting issues, practicing advocacy in dealing with the schools, and using literacy to explore issues of learning and teaching.

There is little evidence currently available about the effectiveness of connecting home and community content to classroom curriculum. Heath (1983), however, catalogues the success of one white teacher who changed her curriculum after participating in a seminar (with Heath and other teachers) whose purpose was to aid them in learning about the traditions, values, and "ways of knowing" of children at the school who came from surrounding small communities. Mrs. Gardner, a first grade teacher, elected to teach 19 African-American students from

"Trackton" who had been labelled as "potential failures" based on reading readiness tests administered in kindergarten. She designed a curriculum which resulted in all but one of the 19 children reading at or above grade level: eight were at the third grade level; six at second grade level; and four at grade level (p. 287).

From my perspective, it is clear that all four of these program types can be successful in raising the achievement of middle and low-income students. The fourth model has special promise when parents do not feel comfortable in trying to implement school-based activities at home, and/or when a significant discrepancy between home and school cultures and learning styles suggests that teacher adaptation of curriculum to bridge these differences might be a critical first step in enhancing parent involvement and student achievement.

Parent Involvement in Governance and Advocacy

Epstein's (1988) final category includes parents as advocates and as decision makers in the PTO, Advisory Councils, Chapter 1 programs, or other committees or groups at the school, district, or state level. She indicates that schools can help parents perform in these roles by offering information and training in decision-making and communication skills.

A Brief History. The limited research that is available suggests that parental involvement in decision-making, whether in policy or curriculum, is not particularly related to student achievement (ERIC Clearinghouse on Urban Education, 1986). One reason for this lack of effect is that although there are important and encouraging exceptions, parent involvement in school decision-making is often just window-dressing. We will look briefly at three types of parent involvement in decision-making: federally-mandated advisory councils at the school or district level, Individual Educational Plan meetings, and locally initiated school-community planning or management councils.

Williams (1989) reviewed the history of citizen advisory councils resulting from federal initiatives and concluded:

> In summary, parent advisory councils, even where there was disproportionate representation by middle-class parents, have tended to be dominated by principals, who set the agendas and decided what would be done with the councils' recommendations. School systems, having

> established these councils under federal or state mandate, too often have employed them as foils to allay public fears about the quality of their children's education rather than as channels for problem solving (p. 92).

Malen and Ogawa (1988) also make the point that program-specific committees such as Title I, Chapter 1, or vocational education where the principal is granted final authority to make decisions, frequently limit the contribution of parents and teachers to policy making and have little impact on altering routines, standard operating procedures, or traditions.

Another format for parent involvement in decision-making is the federally-mandated participation of parents of children with special needs in meeting with educators to develop their child's Individual Educational Plan (IEP). Despite the language of Public Law 94-142 which specifies that parents be active, equal participants in making decisions about their child's placement and educational program, retrospective and observational studies document that this is not usually the case (e.g., see Brinckerhoff and Vincent, 1986). Unfamiliarity with testing and teaching jargon, dismay at the numbers of school personnel attending the meeting, and an ambiguous role during the meeting contribute to parental passivity. However, it is possible to raise parent participation. Brinckerhoff and Vincent measured significant increases in parent decision-making in IEP meetings when parents were assigned a liaison from school, when parents compiled information about their child at home, when a summary of this

information was presented to school personnel in advance of the meeting, and when parents were asked to present their issues and goals first.

Parents have also been involved in many types of locally initiated school-community planning or management councils whose purpose is to improve schools and democratize decision- making. Williams (1989), Davies (1979), and Malen and Ogawa (1988) describe many experiments. Often the experiment does not last or parents play a minimal role in decision-making. Malen and Ogawa, for example, described an experiment which confounded their expectations. They saw the site-based governance councils in Salt Lake City as a "critical test" of the viability of structures for shared policy because these councils incorporated four highly favorable arrangements: the councils were located within each school; councils were given broad jurisdiction and formal policymaking authority; parents, teachers, and the principal all had equal voting power, and the principal had no veto power; and council members received training in group dynamics and information about the composition and operation of school-site councils. Nonetheless, the investigators discovered that the councils did not alter the pattern of decision-making and principal-professional control traditionally found in schools.

It is certainly possible to find exceptions to the litany of failed experiments (e.g., Comer, 1980; Levin, 1988; Swap, 1987; Williams, 1989). Williams extracts the features that he has found

lead to successful parent involvement in decision-making: "In conclusion, astute and adroit political maneuvering that does not threaten the power of the establishment, coupled with a climate amenable to change and a militant organizational base, will go far toward ensuring success" (p. 96). If parents have not established an independent power base, a minimal requirement seems to be that school personnel share a framework that values parent participation as advocates and decision makers, and that some skill and background in running such groups is available to the members.

Framework for Involving Parents as Advocates and Decision-Makers. If one believes that it is the school's job to set policy and educate children, then including parents as advocates or decision-makers is seen as annoying at best and counter-productive at worst. Seeley (1989b) calls this orientation the "delegation model" (parents delegate the job of education to the schools), and finds that "the model has become institutionalized in the roles and relationships of all the participants, and indeed deeply embedded in the assumptions and attitudes not only of school staffs, but of parents, students, and citizens as well" (p. 5). Within this model, parents have just two roles: to provide support for the schools and "to hold officials accountable for the delivery of services through the political process" (p. 5).

If, on the other hand, one believes that reform of schools is linked to the partnership model described above, then school

personnel need the advice, strengths, perspective, and resources that parents can provide to pursue their common vision. In fact, school personnel cannot achieve their goals without the partnership of parents, students, and community representatives. Moreover, within this framework, parents and community representatives are accountable for school success too. Thus, parental advocacy is part of a "we" rather than an "us vs. them" orientation, and parents cannot afford to be narrowly focused as passive observers or critics.

Often it is difficult to get parents to come in for IEP conferences or to volunteer for an advisory board. Often educators are not eager to learn about parents' goals and concerns (see Kidder, 1989, for an observational study which confirms these common experiences in one school in Holyoke, Massachusetts). When these attitudes exist, they cannot be permanently changed by tinkering with conference formats or adding a few special programs led by energetic outsiders or insiders. These attitudes are common because they are a reflection of the overall context of parent and teacher expectation and communication in this country. For parental advocacy and decision making to have real influence in improving schools, a re-visioning of the purpose and meaning of home-school collaboration must occur.

School-Community Linkages

As we have seen, parent involvement in schools has an important

effect on the school achievement of educationally disadvantaged children. However, Heath and McLaughlin (1987) argue that family participation as the new key to school achievement is likely to fall short because some parents will not become involved. They urge schools to see the child as a member of a broader social network of community institutions, volunteer agencies, businesses, and resources present in the larger environment. They believe that it is possible for children from non-mainstream backgrounds to acquire cultural capital by participating in "such community offerings as work experience, athletics, scouting, and any of a host of others" (p. 579). They urge us to "think of the school in a new way, as a nexus of institutions within this environment. In this view, the school moves from the role of 'deliverer' of educational services to the role of 'broker' of the multiple services that can be used to achieve the functions previously filled by families or by families and schools acting together" (p. 579).

The notion of the school as a community nexus is a very powerful one that is beginning to receive wide support. Kagan (1989) explains:

> As schools embrace a more comprehensive vision of the nature of the child and of their own role in society, the schoolhouse doors swing open ever wider. To meet the comprehensive needs of children, contacts with agencies rendering health, welfare, and social services have become routine. Special education legislation has propelled interagency collaboration to a new level, and the need to meet the before- and after-school child-care needs of children has fostered many connections between schools and communities. Collaborations between university scholars and school personnel have also

> helped mend town-gown schisms. And the existence of 40,000 partnerships between businesses and schools clearly indicates that the conventional vision of schools as isolated entities is outdated (p. 110).

Schools can be brokers in two ways: promoting closer linkages between the family and the community and also closer linkages between the school and the wider community. Jackson and Cooper (1989) and Jackson, Davies, Cooper, and Page (1988) provide many examples of family-community linkages that not only help parents to help their children, but also to help themselves, such as GED (high school diploma) classes, English-as-a-Second-Language classes, or group trips to cultural activities. Schools' outreach to the community can provide important resources for stretched budgets and reduced personnel by bringing volunteers and donated resources (such as computers) into the school or by extending the school campus out into the community, through collaborative arrangements with community agencies, work sites, and cultural institutions.

Although the scope of this paper does not permit a full discussion of this concept, a richly collaborative home-school-community model that recognizes the potential of a child's multiple connections to his environment promises to contribute a critically important dimension to the effort to realize success for all children.

Summary and Conclusions

In this paper, we have examined the need for a renewed dedication to success for all children, particularly those at risk for academic failure and economic disadvantage. The strong, positive connection between student achievement and parent involvement was highlighted, and we speculated about why that might be so. Given that parent involvement programs can be so critical to improving children's achievement, we considered why parent involvement programs were still not widespread in inner city schools and what the barriers to parent involvement might be. A look at the philosophies that undergird parent involvement programs revealed that the dominant approach used to enhance stuent achievement was school-to-home transmission of values and skills. In addition, an interactive transmission approach was identified as having particular promise when the discontinuities between home and school disrupted student learning. Finally, the home-school partnership model seemed to offer the most promise for bringing school achievement levels of low-income and minority children to those expected for middle-class students. Epstein's typology of types of parent involvement was used to outline examples of effective current practice in each area and a sixth promising area, community linkages, was briefly identified as a promising direction for expanding resources to children, families, schools, and community organizations.

Current literature clearly demonstrates that for children at risk,

the participation of parents in supporting their school success is not a frill. A timely, revised framework for parent involvement sees parent partnership as a necessary component of a vigorous school-based commitment to school improvement. For the new framework to succeed, parents and school personnel must give up some of their autonomy and reciprocal frustration and work together towards mutually defined goals. Commitment from community members and students is also essential to achieving these joint goals.

Parents can play many roles in schools, from recipients of information, to audiences and volunteers, to problem-solvers and decision-makers. For parent involvement to be transformed into meaningful support for student achievement and continuous school improvement, parent programs need to be carefully planned, implemented, and monitored with the goal of educational excellence constantly in the forefront. Although there are many creative and successful ideas and programs upon which to draw, there is no single recipe for effective home-school collaboration. However, when the overall goals shape the philosophy and the programs, when joint planning and mutual respect are the norms for communication, and when effective leadership continues over time, there is little doubt that this new vision can become a reality.

Bibliography

Auerbach, E. R. (1989). Toward a social-contextual approach to family literacy. Harvard Educational Review, 59(2), 165-181.

Baron, B., Barn, C., and MacDonald, B. (1983). What did you learn in school today? New York: Warner Books.

Brinckerhoff, J., and Vincent, L. (1986). Increasing parental decision-making at the Individualized Educational Program meeting. Journal of the Division for Early Childhood, 11, 1, 46-58.

Braun L. and Swap, S. (1987). Building home-school partnerships with America's changing families. Boston: Wheelock College.

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1975). Is early intervention effective? In B. Friedlander, G. Sterritt, and G. Kirk (Eds.), Exceptional infant: Vol. 3, Assessment and intervention. (pp. 449-475). New York: Brunner/Mazel.

Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. (1988). The imperiled generation. New York: Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.

Children's Defense Fund, (1989). A vision for America's future. Washington, DC: Children's Defense Fund.

Chrispeels, J., Boruta, M., and Daugherty, M. (1988). Communicating with parents. San Diego County Office of Education, 6401 Linda Vista Road, San Diego, CA 92111.

Clark, R. (1983). Family life and school achievement: Why poor black children succeed or fail. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Chubb, J. (1989). Making schools better: Choice and educational improvement. Equity and Choice, 5(3), 5-10.

Cochran, M. et al. (undated). Cooperative communication between home and school. A program of workshops for parents and teachers available from The Family Matters Project at Cornell University, G19A Martha Rensselaer Hall, Ithaca, NY, 14855.

Cochran, M. (1988). The parental empowerment process: Building on family strengths. Equity and Choice, 4(1), 9-23.

Cochran, M. (1989). Empowerment through family support. Networking Bulletin, 1, 1, 2-3.

Collins, C., Moles, O., and Cross, M. (1982). The home-school connection: Selected partnership programs in large cities. Boston: Institute for Responsive Education.

Comer, J. (1980). School power. New York: Free Press.

Comer, J. (1988). Maggie's American dream. New York: New American Library.

Cuban, L. (1989). At-risk students: What teachers and principals can do. Educational Leadership, 46(5), 29-32.

Cummins, J. (1986). Empowering minority students: A framework for intervention. Harvard Educational Review, 56(1), 18-36.

Davies, D. et al. (1979). Patterns of citizen participation in educational decision making (Vol. II): Grassroots perspectives: Diverse forms of participation. Boston: Institute for Responsive Education.

Davies, D. (1988). Low-income parents and the schools: A research report and a plan for action. Equity and Choice, 4, 3, 51-59.

Delpit, L. (1988). The silenced dialogue: Power and pedagogy in educating other people's children. Harvard Educational Review, 58(3), 280-298.

Edmonds, R. and Lezotte, L. (1982). The correlates of school effectiveness. Unpublished paper.

Epstein, J., (1987). Parent involvement: What research says to administrators. Education and Urban Society, 19(2), 119-136.

Epstein, J. (1988). Teacher attitudes and practices of parent involvement in inner-city elementary and middle schools. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Sociological Association. Atlanta: GA, Session 79.

Epstein, J. (undated). Teachers involve parents in schoolwork (TIPS). Center for Research on Elementary and Middle Schools, Johns Hopkins University, 3505 North Charles Street, Baltimore, MD 21218.

ERIC Clearinghouse on Urban Education, (1986). Parent participation and the achievement of disadvantaged students. Equity and Choice, 2, 3, 73-78.

Freedberg, L. (1989). Don't remediate, accelerate: Can disadvantaged students benefit from fast-forwarded instruction? Equity and Choice, 5, 2, 40-43.

Gillium, R. (1977). The effects of parent involvement on school achievement in three Michigan performance contracting programs. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, NY, ED#144 007.

Goodlad, J. (1984). A place called school. New York: McGraw Hill.

Hawley, W. (1989). The importance of minority teachers to the racial and ethnic integration of American society. Equity and Choice, 5, 2, 31-36.

Hauser-Cram, J.P. (1983). A question of balance: Relationships between teachers and parents. Doctoral dissertation: Harvard Graduate School of Education.

Heath, S.B. (1983). Ways with words: language, life, and work in communities and classrooms. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.

Heath, S.B. and McLaughlin, M.W. (1987). A child resource policy: Moving beyond dependence on school and family. Phi Delta Kappan, 68, 8, 576-580.

Henderson, A. (1981). Parent participation and student achievement: The evidence grows. Columbia, MD: National Committee for Citizens in Education.

Henderson, A. (1987). The evidence continues to grow: Parent involvement improves student achievement. Columbia, MD: National Committee for Citizens in Education.

Henderson, A., Marburger, C., and Ooms, T. (1986). Beyond the bake sale: An educator's guide to working with parents. Columbia, MD: National Committee for Citizens in Education.

Hobbs, N. (1984). Strengthening families. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Irujo, S. (1989). Do you know why they all talk at once? Thoughts on cultural differences between Hispanics and Anglos. Equity and Choice, 5(3), 14-18.

Jackson, B. and Cooper, B. (1989). Parent choice and empowerment: New roles for parents. Urban Education, 24, 3, 263-286.

Jackson, B., Davies, D., Cooper, B., and Page, J. (1988). Parents make a difference: An evaluation of the New York City Schools' 1987-88 parent involvement program. Report to the New York City Public Schools.

Joyce, B., Hersh, R., and McKibbin, M. (1983). The structure of school improvement. New York: Longman.

Kagan, S. (1989). Early care and education: Beyond the schoolhouse doors. Phi Delta Kappan, 71, 2, 107-112.

Kegan, R. (1982). The evolving self: Problem and process in human development. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Kidder, T. (1989). Among school children. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Lightfoot, S.L. (1978). Worlds apart: Relationships between families and schools. New York: Basic Books.

Levin, H. (1987). Accelerated schools for disadvantaged students. Educational Leadership, 44(6), 19-21.

Levin, H. (1988a). Accelerating elementary education for disadvantaged students. In Council of Chief State Officers, School success for students at risk. San Diego, CA: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, p. 209-226.

Levin, H. (1988b). Don't remediate: Accelerate. In Conference Papers prepared for the Stanford University Centennial Conference, November 17-18.

Locust, C., (1988). Wounding the spirit: Discrimination and traditional American Indian belief systems. Harvard Educational Review, 58, 3, 315-330.

Malen, B., and Ogawa, R. (1988). Professional-patron influence on site-based governance councils: A confounding case study. Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 10, 4, 251-270.

McCarty J. and Carrera, J. (1988). New voices: Immigrant students in the U.S. public schools. Boston: National Coalition of Advocates for Students.

MacLeod, J. (1987). Ain't no makin' it: Leveled aspirations in a low-income neighborhood. Boulder: Westview Press.

Mehran, M. and White, K. (1988). Parent tutoring as a supplement to compensatory education for first-grade children. Remedial and Special Education. 9(3), 35-41.

Moses, R., Kamii, M., Swap, S., and Howard, J. (1989). The Algebra Project: Organizing in the spirit of Ella. Harvard Educational Review. 59, 4, 423-443.

Office of Community Education, (1989a). Focus on parents: successful strategies for parent involvement. Quincy, MA: Massachusetts Department of Education.

Office of Community Education, (1989b). Focus on parents: successful strategies for involving hard-to-reach parents. Quincy, MA: Massachusetts Department of Education.

Okakok, L. (1989). Serving the purpose of education. Harvard Educational Review, 59, 4, 405-422.

National School Volunteer Program, (1979). Handbook for Teachers - Effective involvement of school volunteers. 300 North Washington

Street, Alexandria, VA.

Plata M. and Chinn, P. (1989). Students with handicaps who have cultural and language differences. In R. Gaylord Ross (Ed.), Integration strategies for students with handicaps. (pp. 149-174). Baltimore, MD: Brooke.

Rich, D. (1988). MegaSkills. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Rich, D., Mattox, B., and Van Dien, J. (1979). Building on family strengths: The "nondeficit" model for teaming home and school. Educational Leadership, 40, 506-510.

Schorr, L. (1988). Within our reach: Breaking the cycle of disadvantage. New York: Anchor Press/Doubleday.

Seeley, D. (1986). Partnership's time has come. Educational Leadership, 9, 82-85.

Seeley, D. (1988). A new vision for public education. Youth Policy, 2, 34-36.

Seeley, D. (1989a). A new paradigm for parent involvement. Educational Leadership, 47, 2, 46-48.

Seeley, D. (1989b). A new paradigm for parent involvement: Moving parent participation to the next level. Unpublished manuscript, May 1989.

Slavin, R. and Madden, N. (1989). What works for students at risk: A research synthesis. Educational Leadership, 46(5), 4-13.

South Carolina State Department of Education, (1985). Setting up the school volunteer program. Columbia, South Carolina: EDRS # ED232887.

Swap, S. (1987). Enhancing parent involvement in schools. New York: Teachers College Press.

Tizard, J., Schofield, W. and Hewison, J. (1982). Collaboration between teachers and parents in assisting children's reading. British Journal of Educational Psychology. 52(1), 1-11.

Walberg, H., Bole, R., and Waxman, H. (1980). School-based family socialization and reading achievement in the inner-city. Psychology in the Schools, 17, 509-514.

Williams, D. and Stallworth, J. (1983-4). Parent involvement in education project, Executive Summary of the Final Report. Austin, Texas: Southwest Educational Development Laboratory.

Williams, M. (1989). Neighborhood organizing for urban school reform. New York: Teachers College Press.

Susan McAllister Swap is Professor of Psychology and Education and Chair of the Department of Professional Studies at Wheelock College in Boston. She has had extensive experience working with teachers and parents in schools. Her books include Enhancing Parent Involvement In Schools, Managing an Effective Inservice Program, and, with Linda Braun, Building Home-School Partnerships with America's Changing Families .